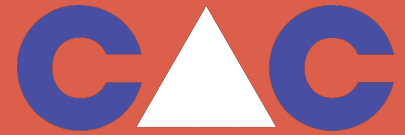




Naomoni Aiy

Maasai
Women's Prayer and Thanksgiving Song



Cultural Arts Centre
Tumaini University Makumira

Cultural Insights:

In the Maasai culture, the process of giving thanks and prayer is an important part of daily life. Thanksgiving and prayer songs are sung by women at many major milestones in life (birth of a new child, rites of passage, sacrifices) or at worship and prayer gatherings. This song is specifically giving thanks for the gift of fertility and children. It can be accompanied by energetic dancing (in more celebratory situations) or by simple swaying (in prayer services and sacrifices).

The role of women and religion in the Maasai tradition: The women have a very important part in the community's relationship with God. They are responsible for facilitating the prayers and traveling to the sacred places to make sacrifices. In this village, there is a sacred tree called Oreteti Lengai where women would go to give

Musical Concepts:

Call and Response: In many musical traditions in Tanzania, the call and response format is widely used. The Maasai are no exception. Introduce this concept with different exercises such as speaking in turn, or telling a story with a common refrain sung/spoken by the listeners. Ask for examples of how call and response is used in everyday life through speech, listening, etc.

Variations: Another aspect of many Maasai songs is that the leading part is often varied depending on the singer and the mood. This is often done without much conscious thought, and when duplicating this effect, it should be done in a carefree, easy way. Practice this with a group by providing a simple melody with lyrics and asking individuals or small groups to come up with possible variations. Ask them to change one note, a few notes, the rhythm, the words, etc.

This is especially applicable in the solo voice notation. Each call may be taken as an individual variation, and the player is free to mix and match the order of the patterns, or even create new ones. The patterns notated are a few standard variations.

Keeping Rhythm with the Body: In many Maasai songs, jumping often accompanies and accentuates the song. The jumps are on the beat, accenting the first beat with a higher, more emphatic jump when needed. Sometimes as few as one person could be jumping in the middle, sometimes the whole group joins in to create excitement. The women are often adorned with beaded jewelry with metal pieces (*shanga*) that creates a sound much like a shaker when jumping and shaking the shoulders. Practice jumping/shaking shoulders on the beat with the group, put on different kinds of music (from fast to slow and in between) and have them find the beat and begin jumping/shaking shoulders. In a more advanced level, have them distinguish between the high and low points of the song and ask more or less people to join in the jumping accordingly.



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Traditional Maasai

Trascribed by Megan Stubbs

The musical score is written in 6/8 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems. The first system has two staves. The top staff contains the melody with lyrics: "En - gaiy Na o - mo - ni a - iy yai Phe ki - nyor phe - e / kiw - yo". The bottom staff contains a bass line with lyrics: "Ná aiy nai - pho - ti ne - jo / ah - ya Ma ru - gey i - lo - En On gi - shú o - on - gera". Below the staves, the lyrics are further broken down: "I - ye / oshi a - ke / a - mon kho iyhe I - ye / oshi a - ke / a - mon kho iyhe I -".

The second system starts at measure 5 and includes a section labeled "3." with lyrics "hoo - ya - i - yo". This is followed by a section with two first endings: "1. iyhe ho - yai - yo" and "2. Ha - la - le - yo ho - yai - yo". The section is labeled "Back to Beginning". The bottom staff continues with lyrics: "Ha - la - le - yo ho - yai - yo khoo iyhe ho - yai - yo ho - yai - yo khoo iyhe khoo iyhe I".

The entire song can be repeated as many times as desired, likewise the 'A' and 'B' parts can be repeated individually as many times as desired.

The solo part can be varied with different melodic phrases, or the notated melodic patterns can be used interchangeably.

A simple rhythmic pattern is often made by using the beaded jewelry (*shanga*) while jumping, often on the first and third beats of the song.

This transcription is based on a recording from the village of Kimokowa, Longido, 2017



Links:

[Video of Naomoni Aiy](#)



An example of some traditional Maasai women's jewelry



Maasai men jumping during a song

Credits:

Video/Audio recording:

Aliko Mwakanjuki & Gabriel Olodi

Background research:

Gabriel Olodi & Mercy Kimaro

Transcriptions:

Megan Stubbs

Translations:

Gabriel Olodi & Megan Stubbs

Curriculum design/formatting:

Megan Stubbs

Translations (Poetic)

Swahili:

Kiongozi: Mungu tukuombaye

Wote: Daima tunakuomba Wewe

K: Tunakupenda na kukuabudu (W: Ndiyo sawa)

W: Daima tunakuomba Wewe

K: Mungu wangu aitwaye na kuitika (W: Ndiyo sawa)

W: Daima tunakuomba Wewe

K: Tunamwabudu (W: Ndiyo sawa)

W: Daima tunakuomba Wewe

K: Atoaye amani (W: Ndiyo sawa)

W: Daima tunakuomba Wewe

K: Kwa mifugo na watoto (W: Ndiyo sawa)

W: Daima tunakuomba Wewe

K: Ndiyo sawa

W: Nimweleze kitu c ha amani niliemsifu na kunijibu

K: Sawa sawa, ndiyo sawa

English:

Call: God to whom we pray

Response: Forever we pray to You

C: We love You and worship You (R: It is right*)

R: Forever we pray to You

C: My God who is called and who answers (R: It is right)

R: Forever we pray to You

C: We worship Him (R: It is right)

R: Forever we pray to You

C: He who gives peace (R: It is right)

R: Forever we pray to You

C: For the livestock and the children (R: It is right)

R: Forever we pray to You

C: It is right

R: Let me tell Him peacefully, He whom I praised and He answered

C: Right, right, it is right

**Right meaning, good, correct, proper*



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